To reach a low literacy audience, write at a 5th grade reading level. Keep the message short and to the point. Below are additional guidelines.

Content/Style

- Organize information in a logical manner
- Repeat key words and new information
- Define new, technical, and unfamiliar words with simple definitions
- Avoid abbreviations, acronyms, hyphens, jargon, quotation marks, and unfamiliar spelling of words
- Include "how-to" information
- Reinforce ideas with specific, concrete examples
- Use simple, peer language (e.g., buy instead of purchase)
- Use active voice in a conversational manner
- Use direct, positive statements

Format, Organization & Wording

- Balance white space with words and illustrations
- Use simple headers that are close to text
- Use 5-10 word sentences; 60 word or less paragraphs
- Use 2-syllable words or less
- Use capital and lower-case lettering, all caps
- Use at least 12 point font
- Use a simple font that is easy to read (e.g., Arial)
- Highlight a word or passage by underlining or **bolding** it

Visuals

- Use visuals that are relevant to text
- Use simple illustrations
- Use realistic and familiar images

Readability

- Complete readability analysis to determine reading level

Do a readability analysis with Microsoft Word:

1. Enable **Readability Statistics** in Microsoft Word.

   For Word 2007 CLICK HERE
   For Word 2010 CLICK HERE

2. On the appropriate ribbon, locate and click -the Spelling and Grammar icon.

When Microsoft Word finishes checking spelling and grammar, it displays information about the reading level of the document.